

Question:

Write a summary of the article, "Persistence."



Persistence

By Paul W. Richards

Growing up in Dunmore, Pennsylvania, I was a member of Cub Scout Pack 66. We did many fun projects. One was the Pinewood Derby, a model-car race.

Each Scout made a car from a block of wood. I carved and sanded the wood all by myself. Since my dad did not have many tools, I used a rusty file and some old sandpaper.

My car did not look good. In fact, it was ugly. I tried to cover the

I became determined to do my best.

scratches and scrapes with paint, but this made it look even worse. I was worried. How would such an ugly car do well?

On race day, many of the other Scouts' cars looked great. I thought I didn't have a chance. To my surprise, my car was the fastest, and I won first place!

The next year, I couldn't wait to race in the Pinewood Derby again. This time, I had help from one of my dad's friends. He used power tools to carve the wood into a smooth curved shape. I decorated it using new paints and stickers. I even used a little toy man as a driver. It really looked like a racecar this time, and I was ready to win first place again.

Unfortunately, I came home disappointed. My car was one of the best-looking cars at the race, but it was also one of the slowest.

I lost in the first round.

I never wanted to do another project again. After I had worked so hard to make my car look special, I had still lost.

The next year, my Scout pack had a Space Derby that raced rockets made from blocks of wood. I didn't want to enter, but my mom and dad talked me into it.

I was glad they did. Once I started working on my rocket, I became determined to do my best. This time, I worked as hard sanding and gluing my rocket as I did painting it. I knew now that how it worked was more important than how it looked. Once again, I won first place.

I had learned a valuable lesson, and it had nothing to do with winning. I had learned to be persistent: to keep trying and not to give up. This lesson stayed with me as I grew older.

My childhood dream was to become an astronaut, but people told me it was impossible to achieve that goal. After becoming an engineer, I used persistence to get a job at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. While I was there, I kept applying to become an astronaut. For eight years, I received rejection letters.

Finally in 1996, NASA invited me to Houston, Texas. At last, I had been selected to become an astronaut.

On March 8, 2001, I launched aboard the space shuttle *Discovery* and worked for 12 days in space. This included a trip to the International Space Station and a space walk.

Without persistence, my dream would never have come true.



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Paul Richards (front row, second from left) with Cub Scout Pack 66.

Astronaut Paul Richards has logged 307 hours in space